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ITEMS OF MARYLAND BELIEF AND CUSTOM.

THAT the belief in charms as a means of preventing and curing disease is not a thing of the past, at least in Maryland, and that it is not even there confined to the negro, has been convincingly proved recently. One proof came in the spring when Druid Hill Park, in Baltimore, was infested with, moles. Through the efforts of the Park Board to get rid of them, it was discovered that a Dutchman, who was very successful in catching them, was cutting off the feet while they were alive, and thereby increasing his income; for he found ready sale for these feet among fond mothers who believe that, if worn round the neck of a child in a bag, they will prevent diseases incident to teething. In one part of the State, it is "the left hind-foot" of the mole that is used "to cut teeth on."

A charm against whooping-cough has also been brought prominently into notice lately in Maryland. It is asserted that the mother of twins has power to drive the disease away from a child by giving it a piece of bread and butter. That the efficacy of this is most firmly believed in was proved when whooping-cough broke out in Annapolis last winter. The "Governor's Mansion" was soon besieged by children who came to ask bread and butter of the governor's wife, she being the mother of twins. At first these requests were complied with, but soon the demand became so great as to be a tax upon the giver, and it was found necessary to put a stop to the whole thing.

Maryland has another cure for the same disease that is somewhat similar. This time it is a woman who has married without changing her name who "has the power," and who at any time is likely to be called on, as was the governor's wife. In this case it is said that if a child with the whooping-cough goes to her for a piece of bread and butter, and if she spreads the butter on the bread herself, and the child takes it without thanking her, "there will be no more 'whoop' to that cough."

A CURE FOR "FLESH DECAY," OR WASTING DISEASE, IN A BABY.

To cure this disease, a baby is measured by a seventh son or a seventh daughter three days in succession, before sunrise or after sunset, being passed through the measuring string each day; while, during the process, an unintelligible charm is repeated over the child. After the third measuring, the string is doubled and tied to the hinge of a door or window, and if it rots out in a certain time the baby will recover; but if the child is "foot-and-a-half gone," there is no possible cure.

To cure the same disease in Pennsylvania, the baby, wrapped in blankets, is put in the oven after bread has been taken out and the oven has cooled down. Then, with the oven door open, the baby is "baked" for one hour.

SURVEYORS' CUSTOM.

An interesting custom was formerly practised by surveyors in marking out the boundaries of estates. It was usual for the surveyor, at a certain point, when surveying land, to give the smallest child in the party that followed him, whether black or white, a severe whipping. Trees, it was claimed, might be struck by lightning or otherwise destroyed, and stones might disappear, but the child, who was likely to outlive the others present, would never forget the spot where he received the whipping. A gentleman whose childhood's home was in Calvert County writes of this custom as follows:—

"I recollect when quite a small boy, perhaps five or six years old, I was staying at my uncle's when Mr. King was sent for to survey a lot of ground." Mr. King, he explains elsewhere, was the son of a surveyor, and father and son together had not only surveyed all the land in Calvert County, but much in the counties adjoining. "He had great difficulty," he continues, "in finding the starting-point from an old deed which he had in his possession. After the starting-point was found and the compass adjusted, he told me that in his younger days, the youngest boy around was severely whipped on that spot, so that all his life he would remember where the survey began. He cut a switch from a near-by tree, and told me that he would not be hard on me, but struck me a few licks gently that I might tell the place when I grew up; but I am afraid I could not find it now, it has been so long ago."

Another gentleman, who is a surveyor, writes of the same custom as having been practised by his father and grandfather, who were surveyors in and around Baltimore.

WHY THE DEVIL NEVER WEARS A HAT.

The Maryland collection gives many quaint and curious "reasons why" certain things are, or are believed in. Here we find out why the devil never wears a hat, as told by one of African descent:—

"De debbil, he am jes' chuck full ob fire an' steam an' brimstone, an' all dese jes' keep up a pow'ful workin' an' goin' on together; an' to keep from jes' nater'ly 'xplodin', he got a hole in de top o' he haid—a roun' hole—an' de steam an' fire jes' pour out 'n dere all de time. No cullud pusson ever see de debbil when de steam an' fire warn't rushin' out, 'n so 't warn't no use fur him to wear a hat."

Anne Weston Whitney.